



SENATOR

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E-Newsletter - 45th District, Kirkland

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45th Legislative District

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Dear Friends & Neighbors,

The days are getting shorter, the nights are getting colder, and the leaves are turning brilliant colors. The arrival of autumn also means the next legislative session is just around the corner. Two weeks ago legislators met in Olympia for Committee Assembly Days, where House and Senate committees held work sessions and public hearings on a variety of issues, with the budget cuts coloring all of them. The 2010 legislative session begins on January 11th, but before then, we'll all come together in the first week of December for one more Committee Assembly.

Record investments in transportation mean family-wage jobs across the state

The changing of the seasons also means the summer construction season is coming to a close. And what a busy one it's been. In terms of transportation construction, we estimate this will have been the busiest season on record, as our investments from 2003 and 2005, along with federal economic recovery dollars, hit their peak.

All told, the Legislature authorized roughly \$4.74 billion in transportation spending over the next two years. That translates into more than 400 projects across the state. These improvements will address safety, congestion, and freight mobility so that people and businesses can keep moving.

To view the statewide project list, [click here](#) (PDF, organized by project type). To view the enacted transportation budget, [click here](#) (PDF). Or, if you're not sure where to begin, [the 2009 Citizens Guide to the Washington State Transportation Budget](#) is a great primer.

Part of that \$4.74 billion investment is from the federal economic recovery money. The Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) is overseeing and reporting the use of these funds on all levels: Check out its [stimulus newsletter](#), updated with fresh numbers on a weekly basis.

Although construction delays and detours might have added some temporary frustration for your commute this summer, it's important to realize that this unprecedented investment in infrastructure comes at the time our state's people and economy need it most.

Since March, Washington workers have logged over 500,000 hours and earned \$18.6 million from jobs created by just the projects paid for by the federal stimulus package. Overall, about 46,000 jobs are expected to be created with the total \$4.74 billion in transportation investments over the next two years. The average wage is about \$37 an hour, which goes a long way toward helping families and local communities stay afloat during these tough times. Nearly all of the projects are awarded to private companies on a competitive bid process, so the private sector is a great beneficiary.

Where does the gas tax money go?

Another way of looking at the gas tax is to see where the money goes. In other words, what does each county receive for each dollar its residents spend on gas taxes?

Since the larger counties have more vehicles and miles driven, it makes sense that they would generate the largest amounts of gas tax revenues. Prior to passage of the 2003 nickel per gallon increase and the 2005 dime per gallon increase, King County (88 cents) historically was a donor county. Funding the replacement of the Alaskan Way Viaduct, Highway 520 floating bridge, and Interstate 405 improvements moved King County up to an even dollar return on each dollar generated. Other large counties — Spokane, Pierce, Snohomish, Thurston, Yakima, and Kitsap are donor counties. However, many eastern Washington counties receive much more for each dollar spent — Garfield (\$5.74), Lincoln (\$4.12), Ferry (\$3.13), Kittitas (\$2.31). Here is a WSDOT publication that shows more details for the state and each county: [County by County Fuel Tax Comparison](#)

Looking ahead

Our state's progress on transportation issues is some very good news in this otherwise bad-news economy.

Due to increasing vehicle mileage standards and families cutting back on driving, we face some long-term financial challenges since our system is so reliant on fixed-price fuel taxes. My seatmate, Rep Larry Springer, and my colleagues on the Transportation Committee are working hard to understand these new realities so that our state can adapt as necessary.

As always, if you have any questions or suggestions, please call or email. I always appreciate hearing from you.

Sincerely,



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